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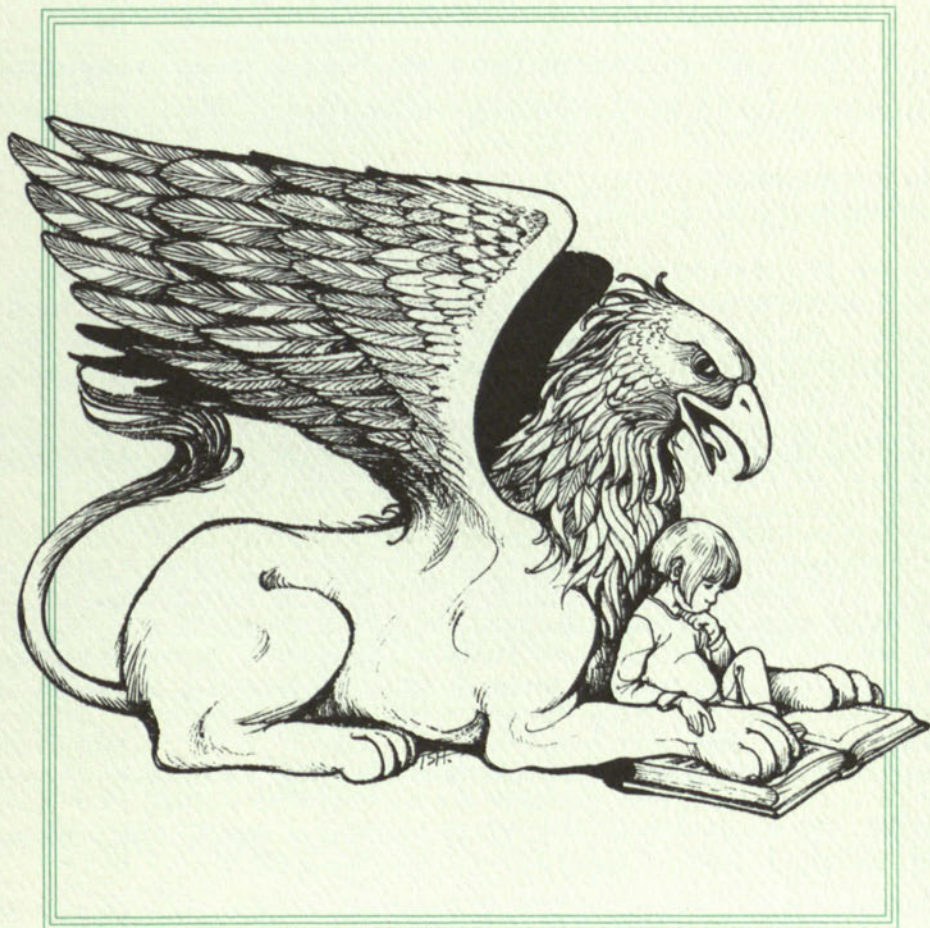
THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

APRIL 1989

VOLUME 42

NUMBER 8



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- Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
- M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
- NR Not recommended.
- SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
- SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.
- C.U. Curricular Use.
- D.V. Developmental Values.

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The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

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New Titles for Children and Young People

Ames, Mildred. *Who Will Speak for the Lamb?* Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020112-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020111-8. [224p]. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. A teacher's demonstration for an agricultural science class on how to kill a sheep provides the impetus for an after-school protest march into which new student Julie Peters is drawn against her better judgment. Julie is no ordinary new girl; she's a famous teen model whose family has moved to Santa Delores where Julie's father has a research appointment at the local university. And, although it is rarely discussed, Santa Delores is also a nice, quiet place where Julie can get over her nervous breakdown, brought on by the pressures of celebrity and her ambitious mother. The story of Julie's necessary rebellion (and that of Jeff's, Julie's boyfriend, against his clinging widowed mother) is developed in the context of an animal rights background that is didactically patterned, with too much information given in the guise of conversation: "Oh, there was one pamphlet about something called the LD50 test that's supposed to determine the lethal dose of a substance. They force-feed animals household chemicals until fifty percent of them die—in agony, it said." Still, the background is unusual, the romance believable, and—as is often true in Ames' books—there is some thriller appeal, when Jeff becomes an animal rights spy in Dr. Peters' laboratory. RS

D.V. Animals, kindness to; Mother-child relations

Anderson, Joan. *Spanish Pioneers of the Southwest*; illus. with photographs by George Ancona. Lodestar, 1989. ISBN 0-525-67264-8. 62p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Profusely illustrated with black and white photographs (good quality, but tending to be repetitious) of actors, this photoesssay is set in an old combination inn and fort outside of Santa Fe. The text describes the daily life of an extended family, the Bacas, in the mid-seventeenth century. Unfortunately, the information is vitiated by the narrative framework in which it is set, and the style is wooden. Although it is useful to have a picture of one kind of lifestyle in our diverse heritage, it may disappoint children who expect, from the title, to have a broad picture of Spanish migrants and settlers, rather than a view of one settlement. ZS

Anderson, Margaret. *The Druid's Gift*. Knopf, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-394-91936-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-394-81936-5. [192p]. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 6-9. Carefully crafted and colorfully written, this multi-layered time shift fantasy is particularly appealing in the picture it gives of succeeding generations of the inhabitants of an isolated island off the Scottish coast. There are interlocking events and memories that hold the story together, from the era of Viking invasions to a millenium later; one of the links is the protagonist of each segment (called, variously, Caitlin, Cathan, Catie, or Catriona) who is instrumental in fusing historic themes and in bringing together the traditionally hostile Druids and the islanders. A nicely meshed combination of realism and fantasy, this has a colorful setting, a brisk pace, and characters who come alive. ZS

Barton, Miles. *Why Do People Harm Animals?* Gloucester/Watts, 1989. ISBN 0-531-17135-3. 32p. illus. with photographs. (Let's Talk About). \$10.40.

R Gr. 2-4. As accessible as Versfield's *Why Are People Hungry?* (BCCB: 6/88) in the same series, but less doctrinaire, this is a good introduction to concepts of animal rights. Barton begins with pets ("Is it a good idea to keep pets?") and then briefly but clearly considers questions of zoos, wild animals, furs, farm animals, and animal experimentation. While pointing out cases of obvious neglect and abuse, most of the author's questions are not rhetorical, and encourage thoughtful response. He is also careful to point out gains and losses: "Small improvements in factory farming would improve millions of animals' lives. But farmers and food companies would have to pay for the improvements, and the price of meat in the stores would go up." Large color photographs are candid but not sensational (except the cover photo of a monkey in drag queen get-up) and an index and list of animal organizations are appended. RS
D.V. Animals, kindness to

Bendick, Jeanne. *Egyptian Tombs*. Watts, 1989. ISBN 0-531-10462-1. 64p. illus. and with photographs. (First Books). \$10.90.

R Gr. 3-5. Photographs, drawings, and diagrams show pyramid and rock-tombs, their locations, their design, and some of their contents. The continuous text is divided into brief topics and is written in a clear and simple style; it includes discussion of those theories about death and an afterlife that led, in ancient Egypt, to elaborate embalming, provision of rich supplies, and devious structure of passages leading to burial chambers that have made the tombs of Egypt a fascinating story—and a source of plunder for grave robbers—for millenia. A glossary and an index are provided for a book that serves well as a comprehensible introduction to the subject. ZS
C.U. Egypt (unit)

Brooks, Bruce. *No Kidding*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020723-X; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020722-1. [224p]. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-10. In a near-future society where both alcoholism and its treatment have become institutionalized, fourteen-year-old Sam tries to keep his little brother Ollie out of it: away from drink, away from the Alcoholic Offspring school programs, and away from their alcoholic mother whom Sam had sent to Soberlife (a government "prison" for alcoholics, set up when it became apparent that two-thirds of the American population had become alcoholic). Sam has a job, has put Ollie in responsible foster care, and is now ready to spring his mother—he's even found her a job. No kidding, everything is under control. Brooks' placement of an almost textbook alcoholic family into a bleak future time is a daring and believable flourish, and it is used to great effect in Sam's mimicking of the society he hates, making believe "you're going to be able to handle something you can't." The novel is written screenplay-style, in the present tense; definite, controlled, and observing rather than analytical or interpretive. The technique, while thematically wedded to the material, does become self-conscious, particularly in the dialogue, which often comes off as directed rather than motivated. The characterization of Ollie, especially, shows the limitations of the point-of-view: private and secret, he doesn't say much, and because readers don't know what he's thinking, his eventual explosion of rage, while credible, is vented in what seems to be an arbitrary rather than inevitable outlet. Mother has the great part here; shrewd and dangerous, she loves Sam with a passion that threatens to destroy the armor that she put around him to begin with. While the conclusion is over-explained, surrounding Sam's heartrending request to his mother (and himself) "Can I just be your boy?" with too much else, the question still has a sad urgency. We hope things can work out for the two of them. RS

D.V. Mother-son relations

Bunting, Eve. *The Ghost Children*. Clarion, 1989. ISBN 0-89919843-0. [160p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 6-9. After the death of their mother, thirteen-year-old Matt and his little sister Abby have come to live with their Aunt Gerda in the foothills of Los Angeles. They didn't know that Gerda already had seven "children"—life-sized wooden dolls that stand and stare in front of the house. There were nine, but Harriette was shot and is buried in the backyard and Isadora lies in the shed, left unfinished when Uncle Joseph died. Somebody wants the rest of the dolls out of there as well, and Matt determines to find out who is behind the threats and vandalism. The creepy premise is well-managed in a believable mystery story, and the children's adjustment to their mother's death provides an emotional subtext as well as the key to the resolution. While the ending is a bit of a letdown, vitiating the power of some of the previous special effects, the ghostly atmosphere is maintained through the conclusion. RS

D.V. Brothers-sisters; Death, adjustment to

Carrick, Carol. *Big Old Bones: A Dinosaur Tale*; illus. by Donald Carrick. Clarion, 1989. ISBN 0-89919734-5. [32p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M *Gr. K-2.* It is quite true that in the early days of paleontological exploration, scientists made mistakes in identifying and assembling the fossil remains of various species of dinosaurs. This spoof about a professorial boner is overextended, and silly rather than funny. The final illustration, for example, shows the "Tribrontosaurus rex" that inept Professor Potts has put together for public display covered by pieces of patterned material (the professor had asked his wife "to make a skin for it") that give the effect of a haphazard patchwork quilt. ZS

Christiansen, C. B. *My Mother's House, My Father's House*; illus. by Irene Trivas. Atheneum, 1989. ISBN 0-689-31394-2. [32p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad *Gr. K-2.* A child of divorce speaks of what it's like at her mother's house, where she lives for four days of the week, and at her father's house, where she lives for three days. Both places are home, but neither parent will enter the home of the other. The girl knows they both love her, but when she daydreams about having her own house when she is grown, she chooses the best of both her worlds, including features of each of her homes, visits from both of her parents, and staying in the same place all the time. The text has a wistful tone and, since it is an exploration of a situation rather than a narrative, a static quality. The watercolor paintings are colorful and provide an ebullience missing in the writing. ZS

D.V. Divorce, adjustment to

Coats, Laura Jane. *Mr. Jordan in the Park*; written and illus. by Laura Jane Coats. Macmillan, 1989. ISBN 0-02-719053-6. 32p. \$13.95.

Ad *Gr. K-2.* "Mr. Jordan loves to go to the park. All his life it has been his favorite place," this quiet story begins; the text goes back to Mr. Jordan's first visits to the park as an infant in an old-fashioned carriage. Costume details change as the illustrations show Mr. Jordan as a schoolboy, a young man, a father, and now an old man (with a child who is presumably a grandson) enjoying sedate activities in his favorite place. Tidy pictures in dimmed pastel tones match the restrained mood of the text with a static quality that may limit the audience for this gentle picture book that shows one setting for a life story. ZS

D.V. Growing up

Cole, Joanna. *The Magic School Bus inside the Human Body*; illus. by Bruce Degen. Scholastic, 1989. ISBN 0-590-41426-7. [48p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 2-4.* Like Ms. Frizzle's class trips to the waterworks and inside the earth (BCCB 1/88), this jaunt uses humorous action to uncover a world of scientific information, including a rough ride through the digestive system, a narrow escape from some white blood cells determined to engulf the

germy intruders, to the brain, down the spinal cord, through the nervous system, along some muscles, and out . . . the nose. The kids' comments are part of the fun ("I'll trade you these terrific fish sticks for that horrible peanut butter and banana sandwich"), though the subplot of one boy getting left behind is almost too much—it turns out to be his body which the class tours. There's no question of the value of this addition to the series, however, and the "True-or-False Test" at the end of the book continues a practice of humorous perspective on the information: "If the children really were as small as cells, we couldn't see them without a microscope . . . True! The pictures in this book show the cells and the children greatly enlarged." Cole does a good job of culling facts to be included for primary-grade consumption, and Degen excels at controlling the busyness of the variety-pack cartoon graphics. The bus labelled Burp will go anywhere there's a health unit in the curriculum. BH

C.U. Health and hygiene; Physiology

Coombs, Patricia. *Dorrie and the Pin Witch*; written and illus. by Patricia Coombs. Lothrop, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08056-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08055-3. [32p]. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 1-3. Something's wrong in Witchville. Even though tonight's the night of the Witches' Ball (theme: "Unity in Our Community") everybody is very (entertainingly) cross. "Don't touch me, you muffin-headed monster!" shouts Dorrie at sweet Cook, and Big Witch is none too pleased with Dorrie's behavior either: "Excuses, excuses! Get on this broomstick!" Could the trouble, Dorrie wonders, have anything to do with the new Pin Witch, who has been giving away new party clothes as a promotion for her sewing business? Perennially popular Dorrie is bound to attract new fans with her first full-color appearance. The spiky tidiness of Coombs' drawing is enhanced by Halloween tones; and the Pin Witch's magic has a satisfyingly creepy green glow. The gentle send-up of a spooky subject will reassure young readers, and once again they will applaud Dorrie's ingenuity in defeating the forces of evil. RS

Corbin, Carole Lynn. *Knights*. ISBN 0-531-10692-6. McWilliams, Karen. *Pirates*. ISBN 0-531-10464-8. Each book: Watts, 1989. 64p. illus. (First Books). \$10.90.

Ad Gr. 3-5. Knighthood and piracy, two occupations likely to draw the attention of children, have an inherent drama that overcomes the defects of both these books. *Knights* is informative on the training, equipment, castle life, war games, and chivalry codes of knights, but the writing is relentlessly choppy ("He ran and wrestled. He rode a horse, played ball, and bowled." He did this. He did that). Handsome illustrations are in medieval style and full color, but the bibliography of four children's books omits obvious entries such as Joe Lasker's *A Tournament of Knights*. *Pirates* is more smoothly written, with a few exceptions ("When lit, smoke drifted around his head . . ."). McWilliams takes care to point out the social and political context of piracy, the hard lives that folklore has obscured, and famous pirates, including two women. Again, this is well illustrated, often with romantic reproductions of work by Howard

Pyle or other artists, but it needs maps, especially in pages that discuss specific localities and seaways. The glossary, bibliography, and list for further reading are helpful; both books are indexed. BH
C.U. History

DeClements, Barthe. *Five-Finger Discount*. Delacorte, 1989. ISBN 0-440-50166-0. [160p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-6. DeClements is an earnest, direct writer whose prose has little nuance, but whose perspective is clear, honest, and in absolute empathy with her audience. In this latest—first in a projected trilogy—fifth-grader Jerry is worried that his new schoolmates will find out his dad is in prison for auto theft. When the kid next door announces she's a "PK," Jerry figures he's got company, until he realizes Grace is a *preacher's* kid, and not without problems of her own. Friendship and classroom dynamics are dead on, and Jerry's ongoing encounter with a blackmailing bully will bring many nods of cynical recognition. Characterization is simplistic, particularly as the author seems to tell readers that you can tell a "mean" person from a "good" person just by looking at them. Jerry's dad is more subtly drawn: fresh out on parole, he attempts to steal a pair of shoes, and then becomes saddened to learn that Jerry has done the same thing for his Mom's Christmas present. It is interesting that DeClements' books have achieved enormous popularity despite their almost absolute lack of humor, usually a prerequisite for preteen approval. RS

D.V. Father-son relations

Dexter, Catherine. *Mazemaker*. Morrow, 1989. ISBN 0-688-07383-2. [192p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-7. Intrigued by the maze painted on a school playground, curious because she is sure that she saw a cat fade to invisibility there, twelve-year-old Winnie decides to see if she can get taken in by the maze. She can. That is how Winnie goes back to a time, a hundred years earlier, where her story of coming from the future is believed and her interest in the maker of the maze leads to a conviction that when she gets back to her own time she can find him—William, the missing mazemaker of 1889—and send him home. This is a convincing time-shift fantasy, with believable passage between the two time frames and with a logical closed-loop structure that is reader-friendly. A well-paced writing style and nicely developed characters provide a solid base for the story. ZS

Diggs, Lucy. *Selene Goes Home*; illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Atheneum, 1989. ISBN 0-689-31464-7. [64p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 3-5. A feline adventure story in which Selene the cat refuses to accept her mistress' move from a comfortable hillside home to a houseboat plagued by an audacious sea gull. Selene eventually gets the gull to give her a ride back to the countryside but finds her old haunts inhabited by strangers with a fierce watchdog. Making her way back to the houseboat, she

picks up a stray calico who promises to make her new life more tolerable. Written at a low reading level, this has flashes of kittenish insight and may in fact offer the comfort of adjustment to newly moved children, but it's limited by the unlikely contrivance of Selene's ride through the sky. If a cat's going to fly, give it real wings as Ursula LeGuin did in her elegantly crafted fantasy *Catwings* (BCCB: 9/88). BH
D.V. Adaptability

Duffy, James. *The Doll Hospital*. Scholastic, 1989. ISBN 0-590-41860-2. [160p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 3-5. An invalid for as long as she can remember, Alison (who is eight, her illness never identified) sets up a doll hospital with the help of her older brother Christopher, thirteen. Alison becomes overstimulated by all the "hospital" activity and is again hospitalized; the story ends with Alison improved to the point where the doctor says she may go back to school after Christmas. All of this makes an adequate, if not unusual, story. What weakens it is the fact that it becomes a contrived fantasy when all the toys begin to talk to each other and to Alison and Christopher. Doll fantasies appeal to some readers; what vitiates this story is the failure of the fantasy element to blend with its realistic matrix. ZS

Dunlop, Beverley. *The Poetry Girl*. Houghton, 1989. ISBN 0-395-49679-9. [216p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 6-8. Twelve-year-old Natalia Olga Kondrotovitch is the victim of a miserable childhood. Her father, a Russian immigrant to New Zealand, is consistently harsh, subject to bouts of depression, and forever fighting with her mother. Tall, thin, and sickly, Natalia is often absent from school and doesn't fit in when she's there. In the two years covered by this first-person narrative, which is organized by a chapter for each month, the family moves twice and suffers a crisis of financial and emotional insecurity when Natalia's father attempts suicide. The scenes of Natalia's persecution by cruel classmates and masters are unforgettably vivid, but the confessional tone, while effective in some places, occasionally runs to longwinded. Natalia's retreat into poetry is also unevenly handled; sometimes it serves to pace or even dramatize a passage and at other times, when the same verses appear over and over without narrative purpose, it simply becomes repetitive. The New Zealand setting of 1947-1949 will be historical fiction for young readers, and the educational formalities—all Natalia's teachers are simply named Sir—may seem strange. Yet the pain of isolation and the vulnerability to betrayal by acts of small-minded rejection will not seem foreign at all. BH
D.V. Self-confidence

Ferguson, Alane. *Show Me the Evidence*. Bradbury, 1989. ISBN 0-02-734521-1. [160p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 7-10. Janaan has been increasingly difficult since the crib death of her brother. Why, her friend Lauren wonders, did Janaan so violently

deface the happy photograph of her and Lauren together? Even scarier are the crib deaths of two other babies—soon after Janaan was with them. And, all three corpses are missing. For both Janaan and the author, this is a how-is-she-going-to-get-out-of-*this-one* story, and while Janaan is exonerated at the end, the author relies on an unlikely, and ludicrous, sequence of events to tie up the thriller. This is a particular shame because up until the encounter with the witch doctor the story is convincing, the emotions intense, and the suspense exceptionally well maintained. RS

D.V. Friendship values

Forsyth, Adrian. *Journey through a Tropical Jungle*. Simon, 1989. ISBN 0-671-66262-7. 80p. illus. with photographs by the author and others. \$14.95.

R Gr. 5-8. Forsyth, a Canadian naturalist, takes readers along for a ramble through the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve in Costa Rica. His organization of material is casual, combining anecdotes about plant life, animals, and weather as he encountered them. For example, while investigating the crooks and crannies of a strangler tree, Forsyth “jumped back when a big mother scorpion came scuttling out with her stinger tail held up in the air.” Thrills and chills are amply balanced with hard information, and the loose organization has a synergistic effect, showing how each member of the environment affects the others: quetzals eat avocados, spit out the seeds, start new avocado plants. Forsyth is also gently insistent about the role the tropical forests play in our own lives. “If you’ve eaten a chocolate bar, you’ve eaten a bit of a tropical forest tree.” Color photographs are many, well-keyed to the text, but arranged in a somewhat placid layout. RS

D.V. Environmental awareness

George, Jean Craighead. *Shark Beneath the Reef*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021993-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021992-0. [224p]. Library ed. \$11.89; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-9. Tomas is fourteen, lives in Baja, California, and is at a crossroads, undecided whether to become a fisherman like the other men of his family or to pursue, through more schooling, his interest in marine biology. In some ways this is a successful book, painting a warm picture of an extended Mexican family and giving a vivid picture of the setting. It offers considerable information about ocean creatures—but, unfortunately, this often interrupts the flow of the narrative, whether presented as interpolations by the author or as long observations in the thoughts of Tomas. The plot, too, is more creaky than George’s structures usually are, as Tomas repeatedly *almost* encounters the predatory hammerhead shark he erroneously assumes to be a whale shark (rather than a killer like the hammerhead). By the time there is an encounter, it is almost an anticlimax. Fortunately, other plot developments offer surcease, as Tomas and his family bow to the inevitability of change from traditional patterns and life-style, but the two plot facets, while they impinge on each other, never coalesce. ZS

D.V. Education, valuing and seeking; Family relations

Gilbert, Sara. *Get Help: Solving the Problems in Your Life*; illus. by Ellen Friedman. Morrow, 1989. ISBN 0-688-08010-3. [160p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 6-10. No judging, no patronizing, no soothing: this is a tremendously useful, wide ranging, and well-organized compendium of organizations and groups that offer either direct help, or access to further help or information, on problems that range from abuse or addiction to running away or legal rights. The writing is crisp and clear; the foreword explains how the book is arranged, what the significance of included or omitted material is, that all sources cited are either free or low-cost help for adolescents, and how entries were compiled and coded. A sample of the format is that of "Education and Scholarships," which begins with general facts, a list of sources (annotated and including addresses and telephone numbers) under "Contact," tips on telephone approaches, a "Get help" section and a more detailed "More help" section. A final section provides backup material, such as what to do if you dial an 800 number and it's out of service, or how to get help if you are deaf or disabled, or where to call (often a hotline) if there is an emergency. Just what has been needed, this gives readers information about more than 100 national organizations, tells readers what to expect from them, and how best to benefit from the help they provide. ZS

Gould, Deborah. *Aaron's Shirt*; illus. by Cheryl Harness. Bradbury, 1989. ISBN 0-02-736351-1. [32p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad 3-6 yrs. This picture story book should elicit many a gleam of recognition reflex, since it deals with a common phenomenon in the lives of young children: clinging to a favorite garment. Aaron really likes the red-and-white striped shirt he's chosen at a department store. He gives it up only through necessity (laundering or seasonal storage) and wears it until it's uncomfortably tight. Eventually he admits defeat, passing the shirt on to his stuffed bear. There's not a great deal of action here, but there's a nice combination of a familiar pattern, a patient parent, an acceptable solution, and the concepts of time passing and size changing. Watercolor pictures lack distinction but are adequately composed, with ample space and bright colors. ZS D.V. Growing up

Greaves, Margaret, ad. *The Magic Flute: The Story of Mozart's Opera*; illus. by Francesca Crespi. Holt, 1989. ISBN 0-8050-0887-X. 32p. \$13.95.

Ad Gr. 2-4. Mozart's mixture of low comedy, high Masonry, and magic is a great first opera for children. The tunes are terrific, the characters appealing, the special effects awesome. But the libretto has always been confusing, and it is to the adapter's credit that she remains faithful to the dialogue while only once using the dread word *meanwhile* to convey the multifarious action. Crespi's illustrations are delicately folk-like, but all the characters look like young children dressed up for a school play, an approach that limits viewers to the charming aspects of the work, ignoring its more monumental qualities. Try using the book with a recording. RS

Hall, Lynn. *Dagmar Schultz and the Powers of Darkness*. Scribner, 1989. ISBN 0-684-19037-0. [80p]. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 5-7. Dagmar Schultz, twelve and eleven-twelfths years old, wants so desperately for James Mann, thirteen, to fall in love with her that she makes a deal with the only warlock in Berlin, Iowa. She will get him a date with athletic Aunt Gretchen if he will cast a love spell on James. As in the old cumulative folktales, Dagmar has to buy one favor with another, in this case persuading her father to bowl with Gertrude's team to get Gertrude to go out with the warlock. The spell finally falls on James' little brother, who follows Dagmar around like a puppy, but James begins to like her anyway for making a fool out of herself playing bingo. It's all pretty farfetched, and not just because of the magic. However, fans of the first book about Dagmar will probably enjoy the humor here. In the middle of describing his mother's talent for casting spells, the warlock stops sadly. "Did she die?" Dagmar asks. "Worse than that," he replies. "She became a Lutheran. . . . of course you can't really be a practicing Lutheran and a practicing witch at the same time. It's frowned upon by both organizations." BH
D.V. Boy-girl relations

Hewett, Joan. *Getting Elected: The Diary of a Campaign*; illus. with photographs by Richard Hewett. Lodestar, 1989. ISBN 0-525-67259-1. 48p. \$13.95.

R Gr. 4-6. Coverage of the election process is much needed, and of a successful Hispanic woman at the city council level, doubly so. The candidate here, Gloria Molina of Los Angeles, is politically and photogenically appealing. The Hewitt team follows her through the most telling days of her campaign, including door-to-door canvasses, speeches, fundraising, debates, banquets, precinct-walking, mailings, staff and volunteer organization, and poll watching. The grand finale? "This is a victory for all of us. . . ." Five juvenile titles are listed for further reading, and there's an index. This is exactly what it claims to be: not a perspective on process but a hands-on diary of activities during a election. It doesn't show the weariness, the discouragement, the defeat, or even the motivation, but it shows what works in a situation where "there is no single big election issue" or even party affiliation, but rather four reasonably qualified candidates, of which Gloria is the oldest and the only woman. The black-and-white photographs are businesslike and sometimes even revealing. BH
C.U. Government (unit)

Hudson, Jan. *Sweetgrass*. Philomel, 1989. ISBN 0-399-21721-5. [160p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 6-9. An extensive bibliography attests to the careful research that is so unobtrusively incorporated into this impressive first novel. Hudson's protagonist/narrator is a Blackfoot girl of fifteen, Sweetgrass, who worries about being so old (younger girls have become wives) and not yet wed, and is even more concerned that she be promised to the young warrior she loves, Eagle-Sun. Will he want her? Will he have enough horses (the status symbol,

in their tribe) to be accepted by her father if he does ask? Will her father's wife, Almost-Mother, pronounce Sweetgrass responsible enough to be a wife? In a flowing text that has conviction and immediacy, Hudson depicts life on the western Canadian prairie in the 19th century as the Blackfoot people struggled with natural disasters, encountered the white settlers, fought other tribes, observed traditional rituals, and succumbed to the terrible ravages of smallpox. What brings this book past its documentary interest is the strongly individual characterization, expressed in both exposition and dialogue. ZS
C.U. History—Canada

Hughes, Shirley. *The Big Alfie and Annie Rose Storybook*; written and illus. by Shirley Hughes. Lothrop, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07673-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07672-6. [64p]. Library ed. \$14.88; Trade ed. \$15.00. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. K-2. It is possible that the reader-aloud will enjoy the stories and pictures in this appealing collection just as much as those to whom it is read. Shirley Hughes has always drawn people's faces and bodies with a happy combination of anatomical accuracy and fond humor. Here Alfie and his baby sister engage in activities that have a universal appeal; the setting is English, but children everywhere have small adventures like those of Alfie and Annie Rose, make small advances in growing and understanding, enjoy grandparents and birthdays, and perhaps get a bit jealous when a sibling seems to prefer one's friend to oneself. Hughes has a writing style that's as direct and ingenuous as her child characters. ZS

D.V. Brothers-sisters; Everyday life concepts

Hurwitz, Johanna. *Hurray for Ali Baba Bernstein*; illus. by Gail Owens. Morrow, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08242-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08241-6. [96p]. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 3-5. Like *The Adventures of Ali Baba Bernstein* (BCCB 6/85), this features entertaining episodes that are mildly humorous and child-appealing for kids who still find reading itself a challenge. Ali Baba is a likable character who has nicknamed himself to avoid confusion with the many other Davids in his class. His energetic imagination further evidences itself in the way he solves his everyday problems—or cases, as he prefers to call them. Unraveling the mystery of the fat man in the apartment upstairs, Ali Baba makes him a running partner. (Ali Baba discovered running when he went A.W.O.L. from a class field trip and raced home to get a library card he had forgotten to bring to school.) He turns a boring shopping trip with his mother into a visit with royalty when he interprets all the signs literally: the Underwear King, the Egg Roll King, the Donut King, The Sweater Palace, and Burger King. "Ali Baba Meets Santa Claus," "Ali Baba on His Own," and "Ali Baba and the Mystery of the Missing Circus Tickets" are all palatable sit-com chapters at a comfortable reading level. BH

D.V. Imaginative powers

Jensen, Kathryn. *Pocket Change*. Macmillan, ISBN 0-02-747731-2. [176p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. This is the story of 16-year-old Josie's attempt to handle her father's emotional disintegration as he experiences flashbacks of military action in the Vietnam war. Guns are, of course, an important theme; Josie and her father have always shared an interest in riflery, and she is a crack shot. The first scene opens with target practice and the last with Josie's father barricaded in their house shooting at police, whom he hallucinates to be "the enemy." Jensen capably handles dynamics between the protagonist-as-narrator, erratic father, baby brother, and good-hearted stepmother, who won't confront her husband's breakdown. Beyond that, the psychological analysis is too obvious, especially when a therapist who specializes in working with veterans delivers a lecture on the telephone. While Josie and her family seem real, her best—and too coincidentally, Asian—friend and her boyfriend are plot-functional ("You like to quote writers and poets," he observed"). Although it's close to case study, the blend of family drama and psychological thriller will appeal to readers. BH

D.V. Father-daughter relations

Kerby, Mona. *Cockroaches*. Watts, 1989. ISBN 0-531-10689-6. 64p. illus. and with photographs. \$10.90.

NR Gr. 4-6. Children's books often give a friendly look at a fearsome topic, but Mona Kerby just can't seem to make up her mind about cockroaches. On one hand: "If you think about it, you are similar to a cockroach in many ways. Both you and the cockroach have eyes and legs . . ." On the other: "Perhaps the most repulsive species is the Asian cockroach (*Blattella asahinai*). While similar in size and appearance to the German cockroach, it is disgustingly different." Certainly, there is information on cockroaches here, but it is too often crowded out by the immoderate tone. In a chapter on experimenting with cockroaches ("Now you are ready for some fun"), Kerby implores readers to "treat them with respect" and then gives instructions for initiating a cockroach fight: "use two cockroaches that have not previously met. [Ascertaining this is the reader's domain.] Or, use two starved cockroaches and a piece of food." While cockroaches will probably never gain the status of Our Friend the Honeybee, any species deserves better than the having-your-cake-and-walking-through-the-leftovers-too treatment offered here. RS

Kroll, Steven. *The Hokey-Pokey Man*; illus. by Deborah Kogan Ray. Holiday House, 1989. ISBN 0-8234-0728-4. 32p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. K-2. An appended author's note points out that several men claimed to have invented the ice cream cone at the time of the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, and that this picture story book is based on one of those claims. Kroll's story is set on the Lower East Side of New York, where Ben and Sarah (siblings in an extended Jewish family) are friends of the man who sells hokey-pokey (ice cream) from a cart on the street. He tells them about his cousin Ernest, who adapted his pastry to help an ice cream vendor who had run

out of paper dishes. Adjured to keep it a secret, Sarah and Ben tell just a few people and—here the story bogs down—several peddlers try to use the idea (“Ice cream on a carrot tastes terrible!”) and the entire neighborhood is expectant, so that by the time the children’s friend produces the first ice cream cones in Manhattan, there’s a long line of eager customers. The subject is appealing, the story is adequately told if a bit padded, and the illustrations are bright paintings, tastefully composed and never too busy with details even when they fill the pages. ZS

Lauber, Patricia. *Voyagers from Space: Meteors and Meteorites*; illus. by Mike Eagle and with photographs. Crowell, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-690-04634-0; Trade ed. ISBN 0-690-04632-4. [74p]. Library ed. \$14.89; Trade ed. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-7. Capably organized, written, and illustrated with color photographs and diagrams, this describes the formation and orbit of meteoroids, as well as their collision with Earth and other planets. Lauber’s explanation of the meteorite theory of dinosaur extinction exemplifies her clarity of style, and there are other intriguing mysteries described here, too, including the Tunguska Event of 1908, when an explosion over northern Asia gutted an entire forest. This is an immensely complex subject, and young readers could have used a glossary to keep straight the distinctions between meteors, meteorites, meteoroids, asteroids, comets, and other galactic goodies. They’re all clearly defined in the text, however, so this is a quibble about an otherwise effective presentation. With a list of six juvenile books suggested for further reading, an index, and a spaciouly designed format. BH
C.U. Astronomy

Lavies, Bianca. *Lily Pad Pond*; ISBN 0-525-44483-1; *Tree Trunk Traffic*; ISBN 0-525-44495-5. Each book: written and illus. with photographs by Bianca Lavies. Dutton, 1989. [32p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 4-7 yrs. Illustrated with photographs that are stunning by any measurement of color, composition, or clarity, these two books offer adequate if somewhat aimless texts that really serve as descriptive captions for the eye-filling pictures. Amphibians and insects come and go in the first book, mammals and insects in the second. The rambling verbal observations seem almost extraneous to the graphic close-ups, which show a tadpole maturing into a bullfrog and a squirrel family cavorting in the branches. These are natural lookalouds at home, the night before a hike, or at preschool, preparing for a field trip to the park. BH
C.U. Nature study

Lerner, Carol. *Plant Families*; written and illus. by Carol Lerner. Morrow, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07882-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07881-8. [32p]. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-8. Lerner’s work is dependably accurate in text as in illustration; her paintings are meticulously detailed and as carefully labelled as

they are handsome. Here she has chosen a dozen botanical families, using one species to illustrate but commenting, in the page that faces each set of illustrations, on common characteristics of the family and variations within it. A preface points out general problems of plant classification, gives some advice on collecting and identifying plants, and discusses some aspects of Lerner's chosen format. The plants are illustrated life-size; the detailed sections are enlarged, and intricate details—such as position of pistils—are often omitted to maintain simplicity. A glossary is included. ZS

C.U. Botany

Levitin, Sonia. *Silver Days*. Atheneum, 1989. ISBN 0-689-31563-5. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 6-8. Once prosperous, a Jewish family that has fled Nazi Germany finds life difficult in Manhattan and moves to California, where Papa insists that he will be able to make a decent living. The story is told by the middle daughter (Lisa, 13) and the narration is punctuated by her italicized journal entries. The focus is on family life, family finances, and the reactions of each member of the Platt family to a new way of life, to the war effort, and to the bitter knowledge that Mama's mother, left behind in Germany, may have died. At the end, Mama is silent and morose, making an apathetic recovery from surgery, and hearing that her mother was sent to Auschwitz. There are minor plot threads: the oldest sister's love affair, Lisa's success as a budding dancer, but the emphasis is on the family, as it was in *Journey to America* (BCCB: 2/71) to which this is a sequel. Although the plot is weakened slightly by a too-neat ending, it is still an effective story of the Platts' assimilation into a new culture, with sturdy characters, warm family relationships, good pace, and period details that are realistic but that never seem purposively introduced. ZS

D.V. Adaptability; Family relations

Major, Kevin. *Blood Red Ochre*. Delacorte, 1989. ISBN 0-385-29794-7. 147p. \$14.95.

Ad Gr. 7-9. Two plots, two casts, two voices merge at the end of a fantasy that is built on a base of contemporary realism, David's story, and of historical fiction, Dauoodaset's story. Dauoodaset is one of the last of a Canadian Indian tribe; he sets out on a mission to save his people from starvation and he hopes to live long enough to find his beloved Shanawdithit. David wears as a pendant a relic from that same tribe, the Beothuks; writing about them for a school project, he becomes intrigued by Nancy, a strangely remote classmate who is working on the same subject. Predictably, Nancy is the link between the two cultures and times. At a dramatic meeting on an uninhabited island, she arrives with David but goes off as Sanawdithit, reunited with Dauoodaset. The historical chapters, told by Dauoodaset, are vivid but slow-moving; the contemporary chapters, in third person, are less effective, particularly in the depiction of Nancy. Well-written, this is an interesting story rather than a compelling one. ZS

Marsden, John. *So Much to Tell You*. Joy Street/Little, 1989. ISBN 0-316-54877-4. [124p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. The diarist of this problem novel is a new student at boarding school, and she doesn't talk. Ever. Through her diary entries we gradually learn that her father is in prison, and there has been some terrible trauma that has left her speechless and facially disfigured. We don't learn her name or hear her speak until the last page. The voice is believably that of a fourteen-year-old, and the diary device has the familiar pleasures and pitfalls of that subgenre: the allure of the secret and private, and the frustration of the claustrophobic perspective and insignificant detail. Teens enjoy the illusion of reading over someone's shoulder; they will also enjoy the suspenseful melodrama at the base of the girl's despair. It's ironic how old-fashioned the "new realism" is looking. RS

D.V. Father-daughter relations; Handicaps, overcoming

McNair, Joseph. *Commander Coatrack Returns*. Houghton, 1989. ISBN 0-395-48295-X. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 6-9. "Commander Coatrack" is Cody, Lisa's five-year-old brain-damaged brother, and neither one of them seems to need anyone else. Their sad parents don't quite know what to do with Cody, so Lisa has taken charge, inventing all kinds of Star War games to keep him, and herself, occupied. But things are changing for both of them: Cody has been enrolled in a special kindergarten, and Lisa has met a boy named Robert ("I'd prefer to be called Charles") who's more than a match for her when it comes to imaginative invention. Various calling himself Gerald Streetpillow, Benjamin Franklin, Elvis Presley, or Dave Waring ("the kind of name for a guy who gives out directions to people"), Robert has an identity for any situation. And soon, so does Lisa, who gets in real trouble by becoming Eleanor Roosevelt in history class. "Perhaps I should be asking questions of you. Tell me, have you heard of my husband, Franklin?" This first novel has an apt, and quick, blend of comedy (Robert convincing a bully that he's on *Let's Make a Deal*) and darkness (the bully unconvinced) that usually manages to smooth over the frequently therapeutic conversations in which problems and motivations are Made Clear. This is more of a problem in the last part of the book than in the beginning, in which foibles and eccentricities are tellingly displayed rather than explained. RS

D.V. Brothers-sisters; Individuality, expressing

McWilliams, Karen. *Pirates*. See review under Corbin, above.

Newman, Gerald. *Happy Birthday, Little League*. Watts, 1989. ISBN 0-531-10687-X. 64p. illus. with photographs. \$10.90.

Ad Gr. 3-6. Founded by Carl Stotz fifty years ago, Little League (and the subsections thereof) has grown to include two and a half million boys and girls, ages 6-18 who play Little League ball in "over 25" countries each year. The text, divided by topics, is choppy in style and the material is not always logically organized. The lack of any table of contents to supplement a

barely adequate index (no entry for rules of play; the entry for "fields" does not include every reference to league fields) does decrease the usefulness of the book, but the fact that it contains information about Little League history, headquarters, practices and programs, and a final section on major league players who have been members of a Little League team means that this will have appeal for some readers. ZS
C.U. Physical education

Palmisciano, Diane. *Garden Partners*; written and illus. by Diane Palmisciano. Atheneum, 1989. ISBN 0-689-31415-9. 32p. \$12.95.

M Gr. K-2. The nameless child who is the narrator appears, in the illustrations, to be about eight or nine; the crayon pictures have adequate composition, awkward figure drawing, and little vitality. The text describes the stages of planning, preparing, and planting a vegetable garden that lead, through patient care, to eventual harvest. There's a celebratory meal with friends and with Daddy and Mommy, who have been conspicuous by their absence since page one, sentence one: "When the front door thumps shut and the car whirs down the driveway, I know I have Gram all to myself." Not until the end of the book is it clear that the child's parents have been (presumably daily) at work, not departed for the whole time of the garden's growth. Mediocre in style as in pictures, this is neither a very informative book about gardening nor a well-designed story. ZS

Perrault, Charles. *Cinderella*; ad. by Barbara Karlin; illus. by James Marshall. Little, 1989. ISBN 0-316-54654-2. [32p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 5-8 yrs. No one could accuse James Marshall's recent renditions of can't-miss tales (*Red Riding Hood*, *Goldilocks*) of being no more than the coffee table variants that currently crowd the shelves. And neither are they parodic—his *Cinderella* is funny, but never at the expense of the tale. Karlin's retelling is simple (sometimes too simple, as when she neglects to get the stepmother out of the house on ball night) and she favors a sweet ending (the forgiven stepsisters marry lords of the court) rather than the more vengeful—if satisfying—traditional conclusion. But she leaves the humor to Mr. Marshall, who paints the stepsisters and mother as smug, overfed kewpies (and never has this trio looked more related), the prince as a handsome dolt (our first sight of him shows only his feet, hanging off the edge of a hammock while his father ponders his greatest desire—to get the dolt married) and *Cinderella* herself as a lovable, generously proportioned frump. You kind of wonder what she and the prince see in each other, but it's clear from the bedroom-eyed exchange on the last page that they definitely see something. RS

Pinkwater, Jill. *Buffalo Brenda*. Macmillan, 1989. ISBN 0-02-774641-3. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-10. "Do you think we do these weird things because we're nerds looking for attention?" Here's the rare YA novel that manages to portray sympathetic characters while poking gentle fun at them at the same time.

Brenda Tuna and India Ink Teidlebaum (children of 60's parents) want to be rebels, but approval keeps getting in their way. After getting detention for some rabble-rousing articles in the school paper, Brenda and India not only find the detention room packed with supporters, they make friends with the local hoods, Slick and the Boys. An exposé on the cafeteria food ("BLACK BEAUTY BURGERS SERVED TO STUDENTS!") causes an all-school walkout, memorial service and . . . barbecue, sponsored by the PTA. "There were hamburgers and hot dogs and sausages. Everyone ate heartily." When the girls start a school booster club as a front for, well, never mind, they are amazed to see it turn into a *real* booster club, with even Slick and the Boys going all-out for school spirit. Satiric but never mean, this takes on the high-school world of cliques, adult authority, and peer pressure ("Let's vote. I'll go along with the majority if the vote is secret") with a warm wit that lets us know that Jill Pinkwater is one writer who's not afraid of her audience. RS

Pople, Maureen. *A Nugget of Gold*. Holt, 1989. ISBN 0-8050-0984-1. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 7-9.* In alternate chapters, Sally and Ann speak in an intriguing novel set in Australia. Sally, visiting her family's friends, the Coopers, has been sent away because of marital tension. She finds a nugget, with an inset diamond and the words "Ann Bird Jem ever" engraved on it. Ann Bird, who had lived in the same place Sally does, but over a century earlier, tells her own story of privation, struggle, and romance as a settler. This is not time-shift, but an alternation of contemporary and historical fiction; each segment is nicely developed, and it is through Sally's curiosity that readers learn the end of Ann's story. There is, therefore, some mystery to spice the adroit structuring of the double plot; solid characterization, a smooth style with natural dialogue, and logical linkages that contribute to readability. ZS

Rosen, Billi. *Andi's War*. Dutton, 1989. ISBN 0-525-44473-4. [144p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 6-9.* Andi and her brother Paul live with their grandmother while their parents, both Communist guerrillas in the Greek Civil War, battle the Monarchists for control of the country after World War II. Andi is a fierce eleven-year-old, unafraid of bullets or the local bully, but Paul is younger and vulnerable. It is he whom the Monarchists sacrifice to lure Andi's mother into a death trap. The writer is not always in control of this intense story, but the telling smooths out as the plot develops, and the situation becomes vivid and real, with strong characterizations of each villager, a palpable sense of danger, and unforgettable family scenes of love and stress. Victims, witnesses, and even intimates of violence, the children here reflect the conflicts that have raged around them all their lives. The scenario is haunted with mythology, from Andi's mother, Cassandra, to the local police chief, whom Andi calls Cyclops. In many respects, this is a classic tragedy, beginning with a folktale and entwined with proverbs incorporated into everyday dialogue. An apt choice to follow Alki Zei's *Wildcat Under Glass* and *Petros' War*, which depict the occupation of Greece before and during WWII. BH

Rounds, Glen. *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*; illus. by Glen Rounds. Holiday House, 1989. ISBN 0-8234-0739-X. [32p]. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R* 1-6 yrs. This animal gallery features vintage Glen Rounds humor in the drafting of each creature's anatomy, pose, and expression. From hefty black outline and richly textured color are formed an irresistibly ridiculous assortment of cows, roosters, sheep, dogs, turkeys, horse, ducks, cats, hens, crows, geese, guinea hens, and . . . what's this, a skunk? Kids will love singing the surprise ending—"With a PEE-YOO here,/ And a PEE-YOO there,/ Here a PEE-YOO, there a PEE-YOO,/ Everywhere a PEE-YOO"—and examining the somewhat rotund skunk sniffing a can of sardines. Youngest participants can use the book for identification (each messy animal is neatly labelled); older preschoolers can practise reading the **BOLDFACE WORDS**. Music is appended. Suitable for framing and, mainly, laughing. BH

Rylant, Cynthia. *Henry and Mudge and the Forever Sea*; illus. by Suçie Stevenson. Bradbury, 1989. ISBN 0-02-778007-4. 48p. \$11.95.

R Gr. 1-3. Henry, his father, and his dog Mudge head for a day at the beach and another hit with kids on the run from Dick-and-Jane style primers. It's fun all the way, starting with the drive. "Henry's father said 'Yo-ho-ho' about a hundred times. Henry acted like a shark. Mudge just wagged." In fact, Henry's father is either a saint or a case of arrested development. He plays harder, eats more junk food, and expresses himself more naively ("I can't tell if that is the front of the crab or the back of the crab") than boy or dog. A sun-filled easy-reader, gritty with details of the seaside. BH

C.U. Reading, beginning

D.V. Father-son relations

Schwartz, Alvin, comp. *I Saw You in the Bathtub and Other Folk Rhymes*; illus. by Syd Hoff. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-025299-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-025298-7. [64p]. (I Can Read Books). Library ed. \$10.89; Trade ed. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. K-3. "Nobody knows who made them up. But some of the poets were children. Their rhymes were passed from person to person. And now they have reached you." Beginning with this I-can-read definition of folklore, Schwartz and Hoff go on to offer forty schoolyard chants and taunts, jump-rope rhymes, and other jingles that children have kept alive. From the gross ("Ooey-Goey was a worm") to the rebellious ("Teacher, teacher made a mistake") to the Freudian ("My father is a butcher, my mother cooks the meat") these chants are likely to be known, in some variant, by most first-graders. Kids may be surprised to see their recess yells on the printed page but will relish the confirmation of significance. Hoff's full-color cartoons interpret the rhymes literally, an approach that leads to some pretty surreal results: "His eyes got so tired they fell from his head," for example. At your own risk, you might want to introduce this at sharing-time. RS

C.U. Language arts; Reading, beginning

Simon, Norma. *I Am Not a Crybaby*; illus. by Helen Cogancherry. Whitman, 1989. ISBN 0-8075-3447-1. 40p. \$11.95.

Ad Gr. 2-3. Clean crayon pictures, spaciouly composed and adequately drafted, illustrate a catalogue of first-person commentaries by an interracial cast who talk, briefly, about what makes each of them cry. The juxtaposition of personal statements may, despite the fact that the pictures show different children, confuse primary grades readers. The list (which includes such motives as fear, pain, bereavement, and separation anxiety as well as, more rarely, joy) is broad enough to elicit a recognition reflex from almost every child, and the message that it is natural to cry is comforting; still, the text is both patterned and purposive. ZS

D.V. Everyday life concepts

Sis, Peter. *Going Up!: A Color Counting Book*; written and illus. by Peter Sis. Greenwillow, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-08127-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-08125-8. 24p. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95.

M 3-5 yrs. A slight narrative framework is used for an inoffensive but ineffective concept book. Mary buys some flowers, gets on a building elevator at the first floor, and is followed by a witch with a black violin case (2nd floor), a chef in a white hat (3rd floor), and a color-marked addition on each succeeding floor. By the time the elevator gets to the 12th floor, it is crowded with costumed characters (blue space suit, regal purple robes, gray wetsuit, etc.). All shout "Surprise" and "Happy Birthday" to Mary's mother. Odd to see a counting book with no numbers spelled out, no digits pictured except in the tiny elevator dial. The art work is clean and bright, but pedestrian in conception. ZS

Slepian, Jan. *The Broccoli Tapes*. Philomel, 1989. ISBN 0-399-21712-6. [160p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-7. Using the device of tape transcriptions, Slepian gives a convincing immediacy to Sara Davidson's story of her stay in Hawaii. At the suggestion of her sixth grade teacher at home (Boston) Sara is using the tapes as her way of participating in the class Oral History project. Broccoli is a feral cat that Sara and her brother find, love, and tame, and she becomes very important to the two children, who have left the comfort of familiarity and friends. They do make one friend, Eddie, whose unhappy home situation reaches a crisis and moves on to a happy solution. All of their feelings of displacement are aggravated for Sara and her brother by the rather sudden illness and death of the grandmother who has come to Hawaii with them. This has, then, several plot threads—but they are each about love and especially about the fact that loving exposes one to the possibility of loss and pain. Slepian is a fine writer, and the elements of her story are smoothly meshed, the action and characterization mutually affective. The message that love is worth the chance of pain is given by the people in her story, not didactically imposed by the author. ZS

D.V. Animals, kindness to; Death, adjustment to; Friendship values

Stefanec-Ogren, Cathy. *Sly, P.I.: The Case of the Missing Shoes*; illus. by Priscilla Posey Circolo. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024632-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024631-6. [48p]. Library ed. \$10.89; Trade ed. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 1-3. In a simple spoof on tough-talking private investigators, Sly ("a self-made fox and proud of it") solves a mystery when famous ballerina Lotta Oink discovers that her toe shoes are missing. Although clues point to the jealous understudy or the co-star ("Lotta is very light on her feet, but she is not very light to lift"), Sly identifies another culprit and recovers the shoes in time for the performance. The pace is a bit frenetic and the plot more than a bit contrived, but any mystery in easy-to-read format will see a lot of use, and Sly is bound to acquire some fans. BH

D.V. Ingenuity

Tapp, Kathy Kennedy. *The Sacred Circle of the Hula Hoop*. McElderry, 1989. ISBN 0-689-50461-6. [208p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 6-9. Catholic sixth-grader Robin has been alternately fascinating and annoying her friends with bent bits of Catholic lore and dogma: she gets them to wear hair shirts, to go on a pilgrimage, to pray for a miracle as did the children at Fatima. But the miracle she really needs is something to help her older sister Jen, who has become increasingly strange and frightening, exhibiting unexplainable shifts in personality. The bulk of the book, in fact, is an extended flashback from a strong opening scene in which Robin hears Jen shoot herself. In some ways, it seems that two books have been jostled together here, and the late 1950's parochial school-and-friends story is more convincingly developed than the narrative about Jen's mental illness. It seems contrived, for example, to have Robin realize the nature of her sister's illness when she happens to see *The Three Faces of Eve* at the drive-in. There is however, one brilliant, scary scene in which Jen changes personalities while on a trip to the beach with Robin and her friends. After the frightening ride home Robin thinks, "Jen was lucky. She made it all the way home with no tickets. Just three shook-up kids." The revelation at the end (Jen is in the hospital, her life saved by Robin) that Jen's split personality was caused by her being molested as a child may be psychologically sound, but comes off as an afterthought. An ambitious attempt, best realized in the scenes of everyday friendship. RS

D.V. Sisters

Turner, Ann. *Grasshopper Summer*. Macmillan, 1989. ISBN 0-02-789511-4. [144p]. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. The time is 1874, the story begins in Kentucky, and the narrator is Sam White; Sam is irritated by his younger brother Billy (not only a better student but also wasting his time, in Sam's opinion, in teaching ex-slave Harold to read) and worried by the fact that Pa seems to be thinking of going west. Go west they do, and north, to the Dakota Territory. While the writing has occasional stylistic flaws, the story is adequate in pace and structure albeit predictable in following the resistance/adjustment/acceptance pattern of

pioneer life fiction, complete with a natural disaster (in this case, a plague of grasshoppers) that tries, but does not daunt, the frontier family. Not stunning, but better-than-average historical fiction, this does have depth in characterization and relationships. ZS

Van Raven, Pieter. *The Great Man's Secret*. Scribner, 1989. ISBN 0-684-19041-9. [176p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 9-12. High-school freshman Jerry has been sent by an ambitious English teacher to get an interview with the famous, reclusive writer Paul Bernard, who has just made headlines by turning down the Nobel Prize. Jerry gains the confidence of Bernard and his adult daughter Lorna; he seems to learn almost everything about the great writer except the circumstances of the accident that left Bernard without legs. The writing here is talky and awkward, with characters overexplaining themselves and each other in a way that leaves the reader with very little to do. Jerry's father thinks, "Bernard and Lorna seemed to be kind and decent people who had responded to Jerry the way Ted had seen other people respond to him. There was an almost instant feeling of affection for the quiet, almost shy boy who astonished people with his perceptive, off-beat observations." And Jerry is and does exactly that, no more—the characters here are rarely allowed to surprise us. RS

D.V. Father-son relations

Ventura, Piero. *Michelangelo's World*; written and illus. by Piero Ventura. Putnam, 1989. ISBN 0-399-21593-X. [44p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-10. Oversize pages are illustrated with meticulously detailed small-scale pictures, line and wash, and formatted with truncated double columns of unfortunately small print. While the text does give information about Michelangelo's world, it is written as though it were autobiographical. Since many of the illustrations are accompanied by italicized third-person comments about the artist, there's an uncomfortable disparity between sober captions and often-jocular first-person text. The illustrations are, as in other Ventura books, both skillful and diverting, and several pages provide photographs of some of Michelangelo's major works. The text is informative, but its details are not accounted for by any cited sources. ZS

C.U. Art—study and teaching

Voigt, Cynthia. *Seventeen against the Dealer*. Atheneum, 1989. ISBN 0-689-31497-3. [192p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 7-12. Dicey is now twenty-one and proprietor of her own fledgling boat shop in this last (according to the jacket copy) installment in Voigt's series about the Tillerman family. After her workshop is robbed of all of her hard-won boat-building tools, Dicey unwillingly contracts to sand and paint thirty shoddy rowboats built by her landlord. The work is odious and long, allowing Dicey no time to design and build a dinghy, her first order. Unexpected but welcome help comes from a drifter named Cisco, who asks for nothing more than to be allowed to sleep in the shop and share Dicey's hot chocolate. Cisco

is a big talker, "like constant rain, the words falling and falling," and an interesting one, describing all the places he's seen and knowledge he's gathered to an increasingly fascinated Dicey. He is also most probably Dicey's father, who abandoned the family before the first book in the series, *Homecoming*, began. While sprinkling hints throughout, Voigt doesn't name Cisco as Frank Verricker, and the relationship will probably be lost on readers unfamiliar with the previous books, particularly *Sons from Afar*. Dicey herself never realizes who Cisco really is, which makes his eventual theft of eight hundred dollars from Dicey all the more shocking, giving a dark irony to Gram's wrap-up moral that "It's not your failure. It's his. Yours would have been not to trust him." As was true in the previous books, Gram steals any scene she appears in, but here she (as well as Maybeth) has acquired a rather sentimental patina of sainthood, her dignity becoming almost picturesque. Dicey can be tryingly noble ("Days passed. Dicey worried and worked") but Voigt shows that Dicey's fortitude and stubbornness have come at the cost of other essential qualities, such as curiosity and imagination, lacks that cost her true knowledge of what she really lost when Cisco betrayed her and disappeared. A brave finale. RS

D.V. Family relations

Wersba, Barbara. *Wonderful Me*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026362-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-0206361-X. [192p]. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-10. In a sequel to *Just Be Gorgeous* (BCCB 12/88) Heidi Rosenbloom, whose divorced parents are horrified by her announcement that she is not going to apply to college, tells the story of her strange new love affair. Puzzling over the handwriting in ardent, poetic love letters, she finally identifies it as the writing of her English teacher, Lionel Moss. Moss is very handsome, very boring. And, Heidi discovers when they begin to date, very determined to stay a virgin until he's married. His sympathy for Heidi's desire to spend her life working with dogs has just about convinced her that marriage to Lionel might be a solution—when the aunt who raised him walks into Lionel's apartment. Her explanation of her little "Lion" being incurably insane is just credible, especially in view of what she reveals about her treatment of Lionel in his childhood, but the author has not prepared readers for this dramatic turn of events, Lionel having seemed youthfully eccentric (he's 23, Heidi's 16) and the narrator's occasional reference to him as "crazy" just adolescent exaggeration. Other aspects of the novel are strong, especially the writing style and the dialogue. ZS

White, Ellen Emerson. *Long Live the Queen*. Scholastic, 1989. ISBN 0-590-40850-X. [352p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-12. Hot on the heels of Sebestyen's *The Girl in the Box* (BCCB 10/88) comes another book in which a girl is kidnapped by a ski-masked thug. Meg, however, is *The President's Daughter* (BCCB: 11/84) and unlike hapless Jackie in Sebestyen's book, she escapes. The first half of the story is tense and exciting, with authentic doses of violence, anger, and humor as Meg plots to escape her captors. Unfortunately, the second half, after Meg has

escaped by breaking her own hand in order to slip out of a handcuff (unlikely but dramatic), is long and dull, detailing Meg's physical and emotional recovery back at the White House. The book takes itself a little too seriously in this half, and potentially interesting conflicts (particularly between Meg and her mother, the President) are upstaged by soft-core psychologizing. However, White is still adept at creating a real teenaged voice, she has teen culture-codes down pat, and Meg, invoking (and singing) "Climb Every Mountain" while locked up in an abandoned mine shaft, makes an irresistible heroine. RS

Wilcox, Charlotte. *Trash*; illus. with photographs by Jerry Bushey. Carolrhoda, 1988. ISBN 0-87614-311-7. 40p. \$12.95

R Gr. 2-5. Excellent color photographs accompany a continuous text that explains routine trash disposal, the problems that have accrued with the almost one billion pounds of solid waste accumulated in the U.S. daily, the pollution of ground water from unsanitary landfills, and the importance of responsible recycling. The matter-of-fact tone of the text is much more effective than hysterical preaching, though a dramatic story such as New York City's garbage barge crisis would not have been amiss. The pictured trucks, dumpsters, forklifts, bulldozers, and compactors add natural appeal to the book. Most children are assigned the chore, at some point, of helping to carry out the garbage, and recycling is an area where they can really contribute. "The recycling process begins at home, where different types of waste can be sorted. The three types of trash that can be recycled are paper, glass, and metals. If they are sorted out before being thrown away, they can be taken to recycling centers." This will give readers the incentive to do so and will boost class conservation projects as well. BH
C.U. Social studies

Willard, Nancy. *East of the Sun & West of the Moon: A Play*; illus. by Barry Moser. Harcourt, 1989. ISBN 0-15-224750-5. 64p. \$14.95.

R* Gr. 4-7. The best thing about this adaptation is that children who must memorize parts for a play will have something worthwhile to remember. Willard's poetry here is as good or better than in *William Blake's Inn* and in fact recalls some of the most lilting rhythms and imagery of that book. Here's what the woodcutter's daughter sings on the way to the Bear's palace: "When you go through the forest at midnight,/ and your friends and relations are few,/ just remember the crow and the cricket/ are twice as nervous as you./ Just remember the Bear who brings you/ knows all the best people by name:/ the sun and the moon are friendly,/ and so is the wind and the rain." And returning: "When you're going back home through the forest/ and the road feels lonely and long,/ the violets will lay you a carpet,/ and the sparrows will pipe you a song,/ and a Bear is just one of the family/ if you know your relations by name./ Blow from the east, and blow from the west,/ and blow till we're home again!" Not all the script is poetry; colloquial modern idiom offers a balance for the stylized verse, so that the total effect is witty and never precious. Most important, Willard does not violate the basic elements of the story in elaborating her own inventions. Barry Moser's watercolor portraits are characteristically

astute in expression and pose, with the occasional scene lit like a stage backdrop. This is lovely to look at, but performing it will transform classroom dramatics. BH

C.U. Drama; Reading aloud

D.V. Courage

Willis, Jeanne. *Earthlets, as Explained by Professor Xargle*; illus. by Tony Ross. Dutton, 1989. ISBN 0-525-44465-3. 26p. \$12.95.

R *Gr. K-2.* Any dethroned child who feels that the new arrival looks like something from outer space will find a sympathetic note in Professor Xargle's lecture: "Earthlets are born without fangs. At first, they drink only milk, through a hole in their faces called a mouth. When they finish the milk, they are patted and squeezed so they won't explode." It's a toss-up as to who looks funnier here: green, fuzzy, many-eyed Professor Xargle or the jowly, messy, little monster who is the subject of his instructive discourse—"to quiet the Earthlet, the father Earthling flings it into the atmosphere". Good fun for brothers and sisters big enough to get the joke, and perhaps a useful prod to get them to help with Earth's quaint baby rituals. Remember: "After soaking they must be dried carefully so they won't shrink. Then they are sprinkled with dust so they won't stick to things." RS

D.V. Baby, adjustment to

Winthrop, Elizabeth. *The Best Friends Club: A Lizzie and Harold Story*; illus. by Martha Weston. Lothrop, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07583-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07582-7. [32p]. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *5-8 yrs.* The stars of *Lizzie and Harold* (BCCB 5/86) are suddenly threatened by a classic triangle. Lizzie forms "The Best Friends Club" with Harold, but Harold likes Douglas, too. Lizzie's bossy exclusiveness drives Harold away until she accepts Douglas as a third friend and renames their organization "The No Rules Club." The development is more obvious than Winthrop's usual style—there's even a break in the story for instructions on how to play the game of running bases that finally brings Lizzie to welcome Douglas. This age group is not always subtle, though, and the realism of the situation rings true. Watercolor illustrations render the scenes with matter-of-fact drafting and modestly bright hues. A logical choice for reading aloud when cliques disrupt personal and classroom dynamics. BH

D.V. Friendship values

Yektai, Niki. *What's Silly?*; illus. by Susannah Ryan. Clarion, 1989. ISBN 0-89919-746-9. [32p]. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *2-4 yrs.* The humor in this book fits perfectly into Russian psychologist Chukovsky's theory that children's first jokes are based on a reversal of what they understand to be realistic, e.g. the cow says "woof," or the horse says "moo," etc. Here, Mother wears shaving cream and walks down the

sidewalk with the dog on her head and her hat on a leash. Later she puts catsup on her son's head while he combs his french fries. The family sits down to platefuls of tulips while spaghetti fills the vase on the table, after which Dad washes the shoes while the children walk around on plates. Just an extended gag for adults, but a source of pride for youngest listeners who can correct the reader with shrieks of derision. The blandly colored illustrations give stippled, straightforward scenarios for both the silly-version rectos and the corrected versos ("That's better. Good night!"). BH

Yep, Laurence. *The Rainbow People*; illus. by David Wiesner. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026761-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-026760-7. [192p]. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-9. Divided into sections entitled Tricksters, Fools, Virtues and Vices, In Chinese America, and Love, these 20 stories are adapted from a 1930s WPA oral narrative project in Oakland's Chinatown. Yep's introduction notes the difference between this kind of collection and the more common ones drawn primarily from the northern provinces of China. "Trying to understand Chinese-Americans from these [latter] tales is like trying to comprehend Mississippian ancestors by reading a collection of Vermont folktales." How much understanding of immigrants' experience the stories will convey is arguable, but most of them have what makes folktales last—a vivid or haunting core. The first tale, "Bedtime Snacks," is one of the best and the most shivery of several ghoulish stories. In it, the monster Dagger Claws has a satisfying meal ("crunch, crunch, crunch") of the hero's greedy, obnoxious little brother, while Shakey the fearful one stays safe and sound. Several, such as "The Professor of Smells," project a sly or deadpan humor. The majority, however, are suspenseful ("Snake-spoke") or ghostly ("The Butterfly Man") or mystical ("The Homecoming") enough to satisfy readers keen on terror tales. What they get beyond that is all cultural bonus. BH

Ziebel, Peter. *Look Closer!*; written and illus. with photographs by Peter Ziebel. Clarion, 1989. ISBN 0-89919-815-5. 32p. \$13.95.

R 1-3 yrs. A great graphic guessing game starts with a color closeup of bristles and the line "What keeps your teeth clean?" Turn the page and find a child using a toothbrush. The following pages feature a comb ("What untangles your hair?"), yarn ("What do you use to knit?"), a sweater ("What do you wear to feel warm?"), a cat ("What is a warm and furry friend?"), a succulent sequence on food, etc. The photography here is brilliant in color, texture, and composition. The concept is clear, relevant, and naturally organized with attention to association of words and/or graphic images. Similar to but simpler than Tana Hoban's *Look! Look! Look!* (BCCB: 10/88), this reaches younger listeners more effectively. It's too bad the answer to "What can you eat for breakfast?" wasn't "cereal" instead of "shredded wheat," just to keep things generically familiar to the audience, but that's a quibble. Ziebel's photography, set off by striking book design, makes this a stand-out in the concept-book genre. BH

Zeinert, Karen. *The Salem Witchcraft Trials*. Watts, 1989. ISBN 0-531-10673-X. 96p. illus. (Venture Books). \$11.90.

R *Gr. 5-10.* Writing in an easy, if sometimes too casual, style, Zeinert capably retells a story that has by now achieved mythic dimensions. After a brief introduction to Puritan colonialization, she proceeds chronologically through the accusations, trials, and executions, and uses many excerpts (footnoted) from the court records, including Tituba's infamous admission of how she went to the witches' sabbaths: "We ride upon sticks." The book is rather short on analysis or consideration of implications, with no mention, for example, of Cotton and Increase Mather's sermons encouraging the idea of witch-hunting. But the author does cite a few psychological as well as economic theories as to the cause of the hysteria. Inherent interest overcomes interpretive shortcomings, and readers may be especially surprised to find that it was not until 1957 that all the accused were cleared of all charges. Footnotes, bibliography, and some dramatic engravings are included. RS
C.U. History—U.S.—Colonial

Zindel, Paul. *A Begonia for Miss Applebaum*. Harper, 1989. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026878-6; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-026877-8. [192p]. Library ed. \$12.89; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad *Gr. 7-10.* "Please don't think we meant to hurt Miss Applebaum." While there is something almost calculating in the *Pigman*-like scenario of a boy, a girl, a word processor, and an eccentric (yet wise) older person, Zindel's latest still communicates his understanding of lonely outsiders. Miss Applebaum is a recently retired science teacher; Zelda and Henry are former students who bring her first a begonia, and then a continuing friendship. As in *The Pigman*, the two young people alternate narration, a device with no ready purpose here, as neither the voices nor perspectives are sufficiently distinct—about the only genuine difference is that Henry carps about his parents (a pair of real Zindel clichés) while Zelda thinks fondly of her own. Miss Applebaum is engaged in one last manic rush of pleasure and goodness before her impending death from cancer, and her own voice is distinct and exuberant, if pathetic: "Thank you for the begonia! Thank you! Oh god, thank you. We'll have such wonderful times in the park!" In the park, the art museum, her own apartment, Miss Applebaum is exhilarating, sharing joy and wisdom in scenes that often seem straight out of *Harold and Maude*. RS
D.V. Older-younger generations; Teacher-student relations

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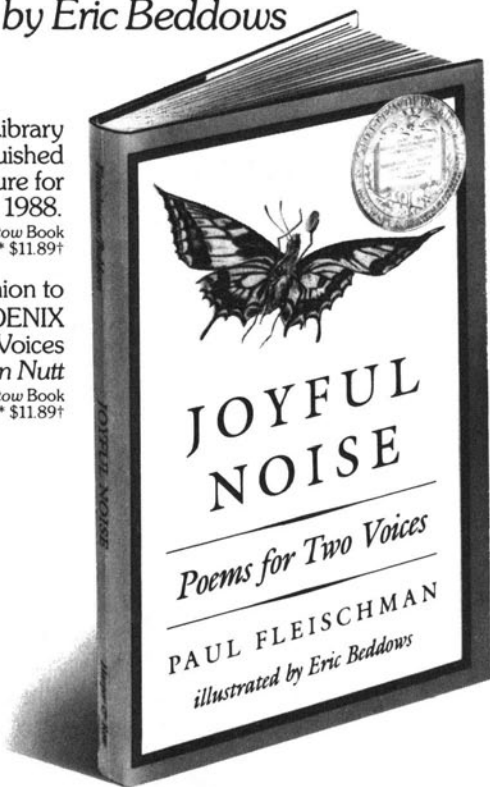
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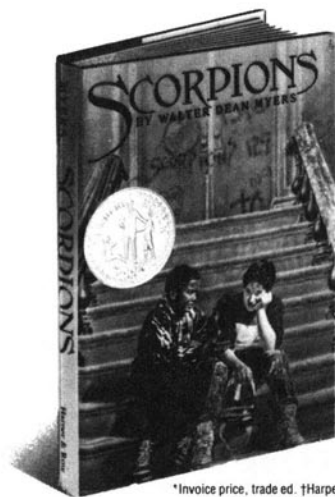
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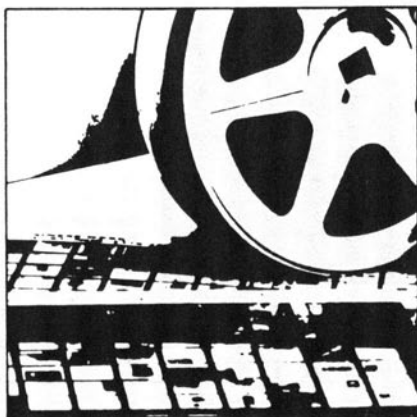
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To order any of the items listed below, please write directly to the publisher of the item, not to *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*.

Butler, Francelia. *Skippping around the World: The Ritual Nature of Folk Rhymes*. Library Professional Publications/ The Shoe String Press, 1988. 223p. \$29.50; paper, \$18.50.

Children's Book Council. Posters by Barry Moser (for International Literacy Year 1990), and by Peter Sis, John Steptoe, David Wiesner, and Donald Carrick (all for Families Reading Together, the theme of the Children's Book Council 1989 year-round reading program for The Year of the Young Reader) are available, along with bookmarks, brochures, and other materials, from The Children's Book Council. Write for price and order list, CBC, 67 Irving Place, P.O. Box 706, New York, New York 10276-0706.

Donelson, Kenneth L. and Alleen Pace Nilsen. *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. 3rd ed. Scott, Foresman, 1989. 640p. \$31.95.

Hickman, Janet and Bernice E. Cullinan, eds. *Children's Literature in the Classroom: Weaving Charlotte's Web*. Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1989. 275p. \$27.95.

Jagus, Sybille, ed. *Stepping Away from Tradition: Children's Books of the Twenties and Thirties*. Papers from a symposium held at the Library of Congress, 1984. Library of Congress, 1988. 139p. Paper, \$25.00. Order from Library of Congress Publishing Office, Box J, Washington, D.C. 20054.

Mohr, Carolyn, Dorothy Nixon, and Shirley Vickers. *Thinking Activities for Books Children Love: A Whole Language Approach*. Libraries Unlimited/ Teacher Ideas Press, 1988. 206p. Paper, \$17.50 U.S.; \$21 elsewhere.

Nodelman, Perry. "Cultural Arrogance and Realism in Judy Blume's *Superfudge*." *Children's Literature in Education*, Winter, 1988.

Rochman, Hazel. "Booktalking: Going Global," *Horn Book*, January/February, 1989.

Rudman, Masha Kabakow, ed. *Children's Literature: Resource for the Classroom*. Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1989. 225p. \$28.95.

Trousdale, Ann. "Let the Children Tell Us: The Meanings of Fairy Tales for Children," *The New Advocate*, Winter, 1989.

